

CHAPTER I.

KURDISH WOMEN: THEIR STATUS AND
OCCUPATIONS.

THE Kurds are to be found scattered all over the [0] Eastern Highlands of Asia Minor, from the Taurus to the Caucasus, as well as in Kurdistan proper, where the population is equally mixed. Under the name of Kurd, however, two distinct races are included, who form as great a contrast to each other in physiognomy as in character and manner of life. The one [1] race is nomad, warlike, and full of vivacity, the other [42] is agricultural, pacific, and not remarkable for intelligence. The features of the peasantry are much softer and less pronounced than those of the tribesmen, who have long and rather aquiline noses, prominent foreheads, keen, deep set eyes, generally black, but sometimes grey, or even blue, small mouths, and pointed chins. Their step is firm, their bearing proud and dignified, and at the first glance one sees that they are the lords of the country.

The Kurds generally are strong, healthy, well- [1] built people, and in spite of the inequalities of [42] climate of the country they inhabit, live to a good [44] old age. The children are clear-skinned, rosy-

¹ The Turkish proverb, "Stupid as a Kurd," applies only to the peasants of this section.

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cheeked, hardy, lithe and active little creatures, and the young women—in the Taurus especially—are said to be models of physical beauty. Mr. Millingen gives the following glowing description of one among the many handsome girls he saw during his residence among these freebooting highlanders: "Her complexion gave me an idea of what must have been the bloom of the forbidden apple of the terrestrial Paradise. Her eyes, of a dark chestnut, shone like brilliants through the veil of her thick, long eyelashes, while nose and mouth were perfect in their delicacy of shape. Though the garments she wore were not of a superior sort, yet through their folds her graceful form could be detected. But what above all contributed to make her really charming was the calm, simple, and, so to say, infantine air which distinguished her countenance and the whole of her demeanour."¹

- 173 Some Kûrdish families in Baklan and Hakkari claim descent from the Oumeyyide Khalîf, and some travellers are of opinion that the tribe of the Rowadi, to which Saladin belonged, may possibly be the same as the modern Revendi, or Rewendi. The chiefs of the Bêbbek clan confidently affirm that they have in their veins English blood from an ancestress called Keighan, the legend concerning whom will be found in a subsequent chapter.² Less mythical, perhaps, is the story of the company belonging to the Second Crusade (1147-49), who wandered in a north-easterly direction from Syria, and not being

¹ *Wild Life among the Kurds*.

² See p. 176.

standing the inconvenience of this head-gear, and the baldness which it causes, it is said to be worn even at night, little pillows being used to support it.

The dress of the peasant women is similar in form, but is invariably made of blue cotton stuffs; the *scherrakiz*, or cloak, is of a darker shade of blue, with white stripes round the bottom, the corners being knotted across the breast or shoulder; and a small cap is worn on the head, the hair curling about the face.

Though nominally Moslems, the Kurdish women do not veil themselves very strictly when abroad. In large towns like Sulimanieh the ladies wear a blue checked sheet, and a screen of black horsehair, like the Turkish women of the interior. This is, however, seldom pulled down, except by ladies of the highest rank, who may wish to pass through the streets incognito; and the lower class women generally go about with their faces uncovered. The village women veil themselves when they leave their homes; and the nomads, when on the march, partially screen their faces with a cotton kerchief or scarf. Men-servants are not, as with the Turks, excluded from the rooms occupied by the ladies of the house, and male visitors are freely received by the assembled family.

Notwithstanding, however, this apparent freedom of manners, Kurdish women conduct themselves with the utmost dignity and propriety, displaying neither the timidity common to the Armenians, nor the forwardness too often seen in the behaviour of the Osmanlis. Their standard of morality is, indeed, exceptionally high among the races of the country,

Y groves and alleys, and celebrate their religious rites
 714 with great rejoicing and festivity. The women in
 716 their gayest and richest dresses, their necks and heads
 Y hung with strings of silver coins, and with either a
 284 scarlet feather or a posy of roses or anemones in
 301 their turbans, dance with the men in rings, some-
 535 times to the number of two hundred. The young
 girls make the most of their holiday, dancing to
 their hearts' content with their admirers or affianced
 lovers.

K The large Kurdish tribe of the Doudjika, which is
 715 composed of several *tribes*, forms another heretical
 716 sect, called Kirilbakha. They regard Ali, the first
 717 Khalif, as the personified Deity, thus attributing to
 him, as do the Ali Ishahs of Persia, a much higher
 position than to the Prophet of Islam. And there is
 yet a third description of sectarians, called Baliki,
 who regard Ali as the latest manifestation of the
 Deity in human form. The more mystical among
 Moslems hold that all the great Prophets who have
 appeared from the creation of the world—Adam,
 Abraham, Moses, Elias, Christ, and Mohammed—
 were successive incarnations of the Divine Spirit, and
 that the founder of Islam, because the last, was the
 greatest. But the Balikis ignore Mohammed entirely.
 According to their saying, "He (the Deity) has showed
 Himself in a thousand ways, and many are in doubt;
 K if he would show Himself in one way, many would
 715 believe." Warlike and unruly as are the members of
 177 this sect, the American missionaries have been very
 717 • [19] successful among them. Such, indeed, is the influence
 of this handful of men from the New World that they

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against this people and, in many instances, their ignorance or mendacity. This may be seen from one of the more recent examples:

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Some of them are farmers and shepherds, but most of them are robbers. If a Kurd has not killed six or seven men, he is not respected and considered unworthy to live. My father once told me a story he heard from one of the Kurdish chiefs. He said he had a son who was very bashful, and this was considered quite a disgrace, for one of these chiefs is always made leader in case of war. It would also be impossible for him to marry one of the best girls unless he was a successful thief and robber. He carries with him a gun and a sword, and no matter how bloody or evil the deed he commits may be, it only adds respect and honor to his name.

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The sanguine reputation is not wholly without reason. In older times the Kurdish chieftains were not above plundering expeditions from their mountains and a recent years have proven incorrigible revolutionists, for reasons which will be considered in this study. This has not endeared them to their co-religionists among the Arabs, Iranians, and Turks. Secondly, many Kurds served in the Raiders, the irregular bodies of reactionary troops organized by the Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid to crush incipient liberal and nationalistic movements in the tottering Ottoman Empire, and the Armenians and other Christians who suffered from their depredations, as well as missionaries and spokesmen in Europe, have been loud in their denunciation of the Kurdish action as a crime. Lastly, the blood feud and brigandage are well known in Kurdistan itself. The first is not concerned with outsiders, but acts to emphasize a bloodthirsty reputation, and the

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conduct of lesser officials but also of the populace as a whole, he tends to keep in close informal touch with both of these. Similarly, he is the step in authority between a muir of his galla and the muissarif of Erbil and reports, taxes, recruits, and prisoners must pass through his hands. The same relationship described between muir and salanagun obtains between the latter and the muissarif, because the salanagun must refer his own reports and problems to higher authority. Lastly, it has been intimated above that the salanagun is referred to as an appeal for all sorts of requests. In the Arab Middle East the private citizen has two customary approaches to the initiation of governmental action, at the "bottom," as is usual in most European governments, or at the "top." If, for example, one desires a permit, the first approach would require the submission of a written request to a clerk from whom it is transmitted through chief clerk, muir, and so on, until it reaches the proper authority, accumulating documents on its way. It would then be returned in reverse fashion. The other approach, often a prerogative of higher social rank, the direct application to the highest available authority, is, of course, the more effective because it secures the signature of authorization at the outset. It follows that the salanagun is constantly beset by these, either in their own interest or in that of some "client," wishing to bypass the normal paths of transmittal.

Throughout their history the Kurds have suffered a

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distinction for robbery and bloodshed, and certainly a part of the usual income of the old chieftains was derived from the enactment of "tolls" or outright kidnapping, either of persons or of goods, just as revenge in a blood feud was one of their outstanding duties. The introduction of better roads and the adoption of modern equipment by police and army have, without question, lessened greatly the frequency of these things, and the contemporary brigand—they still occur—finds himself heavily outgunned. In spite of this unenviable reputation, particularly for revolt, the Kurdish minority of Iraq cannot be said to be the most lawless in the country, for the Mustafiq liwa, a "Marsh Arab" province, is frequently cited as the worst. Although the army may be called upon in exceptional cases, normally the prevention and detection of crime is the work of the police, and their direction within the qadha is charged to the qadimagan.

Service with the police is quite popular among the poorest classes, particularly among those of the "Marsh Arab" provinces, because, although the pay is extremely small, it is accepted as a substitute for military service and, as a career, offers an escape from agricultural drudgery. Officers are attracted to serve just as they might be to the army or the civil service, and are commissioned after graduation from a special school. They are usually derived from poorer middle-class families and have had a secondary education. There is thus quite a social gap between an officer

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The most productive comparisons would be with the Turks 104
or the Persians, but, unfortunately, no such monographs are
as yet available. To utilize the scanty and widely 121
scattered materials on Turkish or Persian life would be at
best haphazard. This study of Rowanduz, with certain ex-
ceptions, stands by itself, in the belief that it will
afford accurate data for the comparative treatments of the
future.

Something of the content of Kurdish life, as ob- 105
served in Rowanduz, has been presented. It has been seen
that the town dominates, partly in an administrative and
partly in a commercial way, a large agricultural district.
The bulk of the townspeople are merchants, craftsmen, and
servants who depend for their livelihood on commerce with
the villagers and the patronage of government personnel.
The basis of the town's importance is both economic and
political. Life within the household, the structure of
society, and religion have been treated. What is per-
haps of great importance is the ample demonstration that (181) ●
the Kurds are not savages devoid of culture, that they are
not all "robbers" and need not "kill six or seven men" in
order to be respected. With the exception of revolts and
blood feuds, the district is relatively peaceful and normally
one is rarely in danger of molestation. The old brigandage, 105
carried on largely by the chieftains as a lucrative diversion, 579
was directed against commercial travelers who could protect 628
themselves from it by the simple expedient of making "gifts"
in advance. A district population of some fifty thousand

the Kurdish tribal system poses some unusual problems in this field. 621
In the travel literature, Kurdish tribes have a deserved reputation as [61] •
warriors and bandits with little respect for human life, and without
further analysis of the situation it has been assumed that much of
their activities in this field is governed by a pattern of blood feuding.
There is however good reason to analyse the situation more carefully,
to discover just what patterns relating to homicide do in fact exist.

The material on which the following is based is, for obvious 628
reasons, very incomplete. Today homicide is the matter with which
the external administration is most concerned, and immediate inter-
vention on its part tends to prevent other action from being taken,
or fear of such intervention prevents actual case histories from
being discussed. All the data that I do have, however, indicates the
absence or very weak development of blood feuding patterns in
Southern Kurdistan. This absence may seem surprising, and it is
necessary to make clear just what is meant by the statement.

It seems useful in the analysis of this phenomenon to adhere to a
fairly specific definition of what is meant by institutionalized blood
feud. In its most characteristic form, it has been described in some-
times African societies, e. g. the Nuba (Nadel 1947): *cln Halban*
[homicide] entails blood feud, which is carried on until exact revenge
has been achieved; a man must be killed for a man, a woman for a
woman; even in their age the two must be as closely matched as
possible. The duty to avenge devolves, not on an individual, but on
the whole clan Again, the revenge is not directed against an
individual — the murderer himself — but against any member of
the enemy clan who satisfies the conditions of this law of re-
venge . . . , p. 151). The pattern is thus a special form of institu-
tionalized revenge, whereby a whole group of persons is held collectively
responsible for the behavior of one of its members, and where the
wronged party is similarly not conceived as the individual or his
close family, but as the whole larger group to which he belonged.
The reaction is one of retaliation, governed by considerations of
equality, and subsidiarily one of compensation by traditionally stipu-
lated blood money (e. g. *ibid.* p. 251).

In this form, the blood feud is not found in Southern Kurdistan.

Chapter IV.

Non-political hierarchical organizations.

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594 The theme of power is extremely important in Kurdish thinking, in the sense I have used the expression *de-facto* power: the actual, total extent to which a person is able to lead people or otherwise induce them to act according to his wishes. There does not seem to be any single word in Kurdish to cover this concept, but, though a blanket term, it is found very useful in an analysis of Kurdish social organization. The Kurdish villager seems in effect to feel that the total status position of a person, and the *de-facto* power that he controls, stand in a direct proportional relation to one another. At any rate, this is the manner in which status and prestige is described. The type of delegated power vested in the clerk of some large, bureaucratic department is not found in any local, autonomous hierarchy or organization.

Formal political organization constitutes the main hierarchy of institutionalized power relationships; but there are also other hierarchies of status positions, regulating other fields of activity. A high status position in these hierarchies affords the holder the right to apply certain sanctions, positive or negative, to persons inferior to him in the hierarchy. He is thus able to influence the actions of his fellow villagers in much the same way as a political office-holder; he has power. Thus his part-status in a hierarchy not formally political contributes to his total status, and to the power he controls, and thereby becomes a factor in deciding his position in the total power

hierarchy of his village and society. The formal political organization, discussed so far, is thus only one factor in the hierarchy of super- and sub-ordination in the village, and it must be related to the other formal organizations or hierarchies that exist. (11) • 297

However, this phrasing of the relationship makes use of distinctions foreign to Kurdish thinking. As stressed in the discussion of general features of formal political organizations, the concept of an office is undeveloped, and relations of super- and sub-ordination spring from differences in the total status of individuals. The Kurdish villager is not concerned with abstract features of village organization — he sees the organization of his own village, and other organizations affecting him, in terms of hierarchies of individuals, of named and familiar people, each with a familiar total status. But to analyse the relationships and clarify some of the principles operative in this type of organization, it is necessary to break down these total statuses into component elements. Previously, the formal political hierarchies have been discussed. In the present section, some other status positions and hierarchies will be divorced from their contexts in observed total statuses, and described. It is not implied that the total status of individuals is mainly a sum-total of these part-statuses; the integration of such part-statuses into a total status will be discussed later, after the village scene, where such integration takes place, has been described. Our present concern is with the principles governing these various, analytically separable, hierarchies, and the part-statuses defined by these hierarchies. (2) 298

There is a distinction to be made between these hierarchies of institutionalized positions of super- and sub-ordination in an organization — hierarchies of part-statuses — and a more general scale of prestige. A person's prestige depends on the degree to which he approaches certain ideals; and one may distinguish between various such scales, relating to degree of piety, age, wealth, etc. The prestige that accrues to the individual from high rating on such scales is convertible into influence and power; part-statuses in a hierarchy, on the other hand, give power directly. To complicate the situation further, high rating on a scale of power might also be said to contribute to a person's prestige. Several scales have been implied in the

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The Swedish emphasis on piety is in direct conflict with Muslim ideas of scholarly mastery, of meekness towards God, and the importance of good acts — ideas to which indeed all Kurds pay lip-service, and which certainly also have some influence upon Kurdish thinking and action. Where a world religion of foreign ethnic origin has been adopted, such discrepancies between the ethos of the religion and of the local culture would seem to be unavoidable, especially in the case of a religion so specifically concerned with social conditions and legislation as Islam. Certainly, the Kurdish villager attempts to the best of his ability to follow Islam, and these discrepancies are largely unexpressed and unvoiced. Only among the more sophisticated craftsmen of the towns can one hear in part quite explicit statements such as: Islam is a desert religion, belonging to the Arabs, and does not suit us Kurds of the mountains.

It is in the local trend of interpretation of a world religion, in the aspects of the religion that are over-stressed, that local sentiments exert their pressure. The main expression of an orthodox religiosity among Kurdish villagers is found in the development of the derwish sect or religious brotherhoods, widely spread in the rural districts, and generally characteristic of the less privileged sections of the population.

Such derwish brotherhoods are probably found in all Muslim countries, but seem to vary greatly in content between different ethnic groups. Everywhere, however, their basic dogmatic position in relation to the orthodox church of Islam is the same, and apparently reflects a mood among the less educated classes. Islam, as propounded in the Mosque, is a formal, coldly intellectualized doctrine of the complete separation of God and Man, of God's supreme wisdom and power and Man's knowledge of it only through the Koran, accompanied by a scholarly legal and ritualistic interpretation of this basic text. Fundamental is the complete separate nature of God and Man, and man's inability to bridge this gap. The whole heterodox geman from Sufi mysticism to essentially Shamanistic spirit-medium cults represent attempts at direct communication with God — at bridging this very un-bridgeable gap. The Kurdish derwish sects occupy a position towards the Shamanistic pole of this continuum. Awareness of, or communication with God, is obtained by

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Such generalizations may lead to some startling sociological conclusions.

(p. 121) This village (Sergey Bay 2) lies just below British Schoolmaster's residence (British) in the British colony, and the inhabitants, some fifty families in number, are nearly all his relations. Being of "chiefly" descent they consider it beneath their dignity to cultivate the soil; they have therefore only two means of livelihood, spending on British Schoolmaster's the part of his salary to keep them quiet, and looking and taking toll from the caravans that pass along the Persian Road.

This paragraph is neither well illustrated. For it is precisely on the basis of such evidence that the British policy of 'military pacification' is carried out on all the outlying frontiers of Empire. The tribesmen just beyond the border are always, it seems, "insurgent leaders and brigands" intent on plundering the innocent peasantry within the jurisdiction of the British raj. Say of course that not intentionally so. He had only seen Sergey from afar and was merely reporting the position as outlined to him by British Schoolmaster. In giving this account however British Schoolmaster was fairly obviously black-balling the British administrator for mere ease, and was probably himself responsible for the particular place of brigandage mentioned. Sergey today has one of the most extensive collections of the whole district, and is considered a prosperous village. There seems no reason to suppose that the position was radically different in 1900, even though the ravages of war had temporarily disrupted the agricultural arrangements of the whole area.

This is not special pleading on behalf of the villagers of Sergey or of the Kurds in general, but it is true that their cultural activities were seen in proper proportion. It must be admitted that prior to the establishment of an external authority most Kurdish tribes freely resorted to brigandage on every possible occasion. It was a socially approved aspect of inter-tribal life and one upon which the Kurds themselves lay great emphasis in folk tale and tradition. But it is this very emphasis that has led to the fabulous distortions that appear in all accounts of Kurdish life either lay or official. To read the literature one must suppose that in former times the majority of Kurdish communities lived solely on the proceeds of plunder and ransom and while the Government continues its present policy of cultural suppression such fallacies are obviously correct. But the unbiased observer cannot avoid the conclusion that most of the more spectacular exploits of Kurdish brigandage are products of the Kurds' own imagination. Even in their proper scale these warlike activities can never have been more than an exciting gloss upon the normal balanced cycle of agricultural existence.

CHAPTER 3

Surface

Under present conditions large scale warfare activities on the part of the tribes are a complete impossibility, but that does not justify us in dismissing the topic of warfare altogether as being of no relevance to the present social situation. Historically speaking the traditional forms of Kurdish social organization are associated with an ideology of raids and counter raids, war, pillage and feud. Earlier writers have substantially greatly exaggerated the extent to which the average Kurd in former times did in fact devote himself to warfare, violence and loot, but in describing this presumption they were, after all, only accepting the Kurd at his own valuation. The Kurdish ideal of early behavior has corresponded very closely with the typical English concept of a "brigand". The folk tales are gay in the extreme; his conversation hardly less so. And this has relevance to the existing situation. The Kurd likes to think of himself as a military leader rather than as a landlubber; he habitually classifies all his neighbors into "friends" and "enemies". The consequences of this attitude are highly subtle and cannot be examined here, but at least the strongest trends can be noted. In the one hand the sharp antagonism between neighboring groups is even today a factor of social cohesion; the members of the clan or the tribe are aware of their unity largely in terms of their common enmity to some other group. On the other hand increasing economic contacts and the constant increasing efforts of the Police and the Administration, in so far as they are successful in lessening intergroup suspicion, do at the same time serve to lessen the social cohesion of the groups concerned.

While organized raiding or warfare is now impossible the private feud continues and may be examined further.

The Feud

The motif of the blood feud may be summarized by the phrase that "a man's wrongs must be avenged by his kinsfolk and his descendants", and we may note at once that a system of small, isolated, nearly endogenous groups is particularly suited to perpetuate antagonisms of this kind. The individual man himself is also his own neighbor, and since his wife's kinsfolk are probably identified with his own he tends by no time of loyalty to any group outside his own village. Within the village all are bound together to resist the aggressor, beyond it everyone is a potential enemy, the identity of interest between the family and the village is complete.

Quarrels between villages may arise from a variety of causes, chiefly economic. Water and grazing rights are always ill-defined and may lead to serious friction in times of scarcity, and this may

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149 climbed on foot up the steep hillside with
an agility quite equal to my own. On
another occasion I saw a villager alleged
to be 120 years old, whose age must
certainly have exceeded 100 years. He
had a son aged 20 by a wife whom he
had married in later life. This healthy
longevity is the result of simple and clean
living, which is common in Kurdistan.

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157 To the stranger the Kurd may appear
dour and surly—like the Jew—but within
his exclusive circle he is smiling and talk-
ative with a childlike lack of discretion;
the greatest secret is common knowledge
within the tribe. The Kurd has learned

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[text continued on p 399(B)]

5p. 317(B)

• 191 **6** he causing in action because his preservation has always required action.
 197 On the other hand, could severely be pitted concerned with those who were not of his tribe or family, and therefore the brevity of his speech is simplicity; the real 'yarns' Karl scarcely knows how to tell, and when he does he lies badly.

When a Karol becomes tied up with words, or the causing put into words which is the malapropos of 'humorous' civilization', he may momentarily feel that he is being tricked by something he does not understand, then, as we say, he 'lets out'. He suddenly realizes the facility of words, and leaps to action behind the sharp edge of a dagger or the trigger of his rifle. Thus through a purely natural evolution caused by his environment the Karol has acquired, among those who have understood him, an enormous reputation for honesty, generosity and lack of illusion.

000 The Karolish civilization has a childlike

[349 (6)]

The Kurdish tribesman has a childlike

157 sense of humor. Like a child, too, he
609 unconsciously appreciates sympathy and
an understanding of his psychology. It is
partly because ruling races were in-
different to such considerations until the
evolution of British colonial policy in
backward countries that the Kurd has
been accustomed to regard every foreign
power as an enemy to be driven off or
overthrown before he himself suffers a
similar fate.

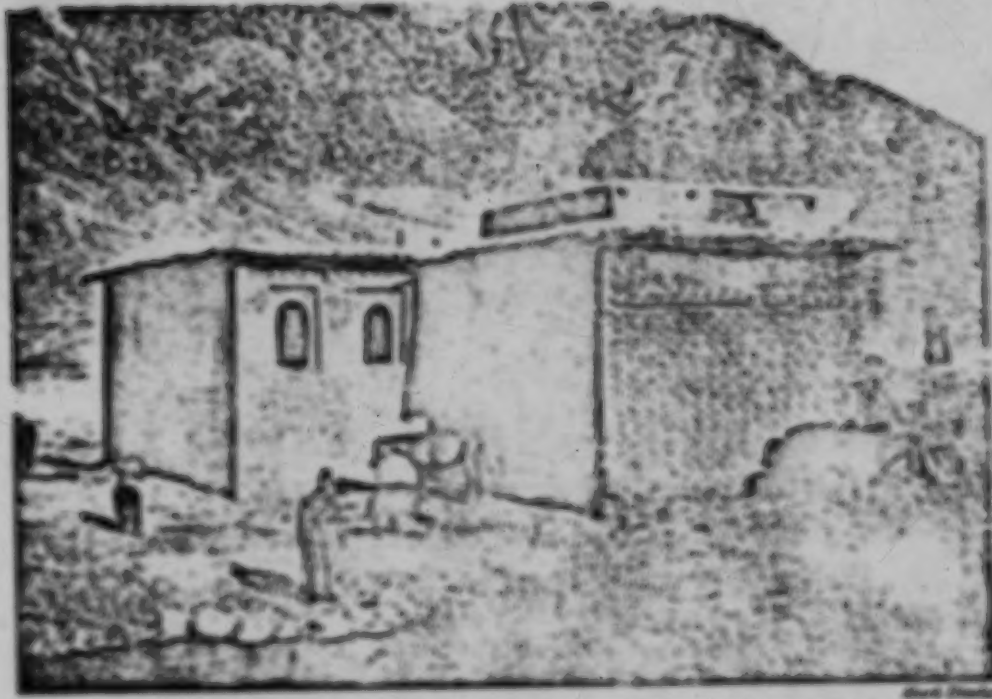
181 Like other mountain peoples the Kurds
are a martial race, but owing to their
195 separate communities and 'clannishness'
they have never featured as such in
modern history. The only Kurdish king-
dom known to Europe is the ancient
kingdom of the Medes. Nevertheless the
Kurds have produced many great indi-
vidual soldiers. First and foremost comes
Cyrus the Great, who united the Medes
and Persians and in 538 B.C. conquered
Babylon. Others have found fame as

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[text continued on p 390 (B)]

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The house of an exile, rebuilt after his village had been burned. He appeared to regard the incident with amusement and incorporated fragments of shell in the decoration of his new home

[p. 390 (A)]

- 161 Leaders in Muslim armies, from Saladin (Salah ad Din) in the hosts that opposed the Crusaders, to the late Bekr Sidqi in the army of Iraq; but they have never drawn attention to their Kurdish origin.
- 175 [10] as the name 'Kurd' implies a shepherd, which in the East is considered a lowly occupation not worthy of great men.

Some have carved for themselves small kingdoms among the tribes of their own race. But that very martial spirit which makes the Kurd proud and independent, and forbids him to acknowledge the sovereignty of anyone outside his tribe for long, has prevented the Kurds from becoming united under any one chief and thus imprinting their name on the history of the world.

- 731 In the history of the new state of Iraq individual Kurds have already made their impression. The best-known is Shakh

[p 390 (B)]

000 his land and water rights; finally, when the power of government decrees that the poor must replace the rifle in obtaining one's rights, and moreover are in a position to enforce this decree with armed police backed by machine-guns and aircraft, the armed band himself paying mercenary troops to appear on whose land he wishes to graze.

In his great flocks and with horses decrease in number, that adventurous spirit is doomed which formerly carried him forward annually to explore the blue distance beyond the next range, and he becomes a penniless vagrant. The process of evolution pushes ever onwards the way we call civilization, carrying man and his environment with it. Those who cannot, or will not, go forward on the crest of the wave are left behind and drowned in the sea of the past.

- 18/ Whatever may be the language of the educated Kard, the ordinary villager—who is equivalent to that gentleman,

600 winter sports, a summer haven from the heat of the plains, and other things on which people spend their annual savings.

439 Tobacco is the only important export of Kurdistan. It has not been scientifically

277 cultivated to such an extent that it can compete with sources outside Iraq. The government experimental farm near Sulaimaniya is, however, carrying out valuable research work in the improvement of Kurdish agriculture, especially the production of tobacco. At present Kurdish tobacco is bought from the villagers who grow it, by 'gangs' of merchants in the towns, and sent to Baghdad to be made up into cigarettes. Owing to the low price at which they are offered Iraqi cigarettes find a ready sale throughout Iraq, but unfortunately little of the profits reach the grower.

245 Another potential source of revenue in Kurdistan is the fruit-growing industry, which so far has been quite neglected except for local consumption. When one leaves the lowlands and the river marsh, and rides on horseback along the narrow mountain tracks which the lowlander never sees, with hillsides covered with grapevines green to the eye, and in the valleys the water of gushing springs flows under the shade of leafy mulberry and walnut trees. Apples, pears, pomegranates, figs and other fruits are abundant with no scientific cultivation, and much of them is wasted.

[273] Near Mohammediya poplar trees, and up-to-date machinery for producing wine installed in Sulaimaniya, an industry might be started which would one day rival that of France or the Rhine. I have numerous talks with rich Kurdish agates in their lighted villages, whose wealth was only evident in their voluminous waistbands and large green houses with numbers of armed men waiting to do their bidding. When asked why they do not develop their resources, a lack of imagination becomes apparent. "Our fathers grew cotton, and we are making

- 181 ing to live by doing the same, so why should we do more?" is the gist of most replies. Some say: "Why don't you English come and show us how to?" ... Foreign undertakings are, however, not encouraged in Iraq.

186 The greatest difficulty to be overcome by the Kurds before they can take their place in the modern world is lack of education—that is, education in the broad sense as well as book-learning. The majority of Kurds have never seen Baghdad, and those who have find in it many things which disappoint them on coming down from the pure air of their snow-capped mountains.

Although the young Kurd who has been in school wishes to improve himself and his race, his ambitions are stifled by members of the older generation who see in the advancement of civilization a loss of their own power; therefore they keep to the line the old motto of "not being cleverer than

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Turkey 481
Kurd 1421

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

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The definition of 'mother tongue' allows room for classifying as Turks persons brought up to speak Turkish, who might in some contexts consider themselves as belonging to a minority group. Some private estimates, for example, put the Kurdish minority at a considerably higher figure than that given above.

The number of non-Muslims was in 1945 only 220,000 of a total population of 18,720,000.¹ There is also a large minority, which may be 4 million or even larger, of Shi'ite Muslims,² who are very definitely regarded as a distinct group by the majority of uneducated Sunni villagers. But the population of Turkey is sufficiently homogeneous to form a united nation in the Western sense, without the problem of violent internal antagonisms which face so many nation-states that have come into being in the last thirty-five years.

The Kurds

The Kurds³ are Turkey's largest minority and the only one to have given serious trouble to the Republic. Though an increasing number are settling down in permanent villages, the Kurds have been a mountain-dwelling, pastoral people. There have been demands from time to time for a Kurdish national state, but it is doubtful whether the majority of the Kurdish villagers and nomads have any notion of such an overall organization, and it is unlikely that any Turkish Kurd seriously entertains hope of establishing national autonomy. On the other hand, they are a tough and independent people, and though it is often said that the two or three revolts⁴ which the Republic has had to face have been due to religious factors, it seems much more likely that the Kurds objected, as any independent warlike people do, to outside political control. Although the main Kurdish areas are now peaceful and administered just as any other region in Turkey, the Government is sensitive on the question, fearing that the USSR may attempt to encourage incipient Kurdish nationalism and use it to divide and weaken Turkey.

Immigration

The spread of the idea of a nation as a culturally homogeneous territorial unit causes very serious problems in all areas of mixed population. Turkey sought to rid herself of her Greek Orthodox minority by arranging, through the Treaty of Lausanne, to exchange them with Greeks for the Muslim minority in Greece. In the 1920's, about 1½ million Greeks left

¹ Ibid.

² See above, p. 120.

³ See above, p. 121.

⁴ These occurred in 1927, (the first and last), in 1930, and in 1937.

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PRESENT POLITICAL GROUPING

It has largely been inevitable that the present national frontiers, drawn in lands where sectarian and social divisions are strong, and where political consciousness is merely in the first stage of development, should in some instances give incomplete realization to the political needs and aspirations of Middle Eastern peoples. Although it is probably impossible to devise frontiers which would be even moderately satisfactory in this respect, present boundaries offer a number of outstanding difficulties. Palestine is a problem on its own, but in addition three other communities—the Kurds, the Armenians, and the Assyrian Christians—find themselves without a political future, and present special problems to the national governments of the various states in which they live.

The Kurds are a semi-nomadic pastoral people, living in the highlands of eastern Anatolia and the north-western Zagros. Transhumance between summer pastures on the higher mountain slopes, and winter quarters in the valleys and lowlands (sometimes involving movement between widely separated districts), has brought the Kurds into conflict with the four national governments, because their homeland is now divided among Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. It has been said of this people that they have claims to racial purity and to continuity of culture that are stronger than those of any European nation, since the Kurds have been united in their present home since about 1200 B.C.; but the word "culture" must be taken in a limited sense, for the Kurds are regarded as a fierce and predatory people, and their social organization has not progressed beyond the level of tribal grouping. Their occupation of eastern Anatolia and the northern Zagros has given them command of a number of important trade-courses, from which they have derived considerable revenue by means of heavy exactions on trading caravans. The Kurds have the reputation of being pre-eminently a people that it is unsafe to trifle with, and their tendency to show an aptitude for moving objects has kept outside interference to a minimum.¹ Even the Ottoman Turks could do little to subjugate them, and they remained free from Turkish taxation and military conscription.

The Kurds were, however, employed by the Turks as agents in persecuting Christian minorities—chiefly the Armenians. The Kurds

¹ This is the result of a succession of invasions in the region, from Alexander the Great and Xerxes to Marco Polo and the Peace Treaty Commission of 1920.

000 of Assyrians under the Assyrian bishop, Mar Sergis, a joyful Free
Tack of the Nestorian Church.

K
137 Kurdistan is a beautiful country. It is in the main well wooded,
with scrub or stunted oak on the hillside and poplars, walnuts and
mulberries near the villages. Flax grow in two areas only and citrus
(planes) along the streams. Unfortunately, deforestation is proceeding
apace, and unless immediate and drastic steps are taken by the Iraq
Government, heavy soil erosion and a tremendous decrease in grazing
facilities will take place. Few new walnut trees are to be found owing
to a prevalent superstition that the planter of a walnut tree will die
with the appearance of the first nut. It might be supposed that the
oldest inhabitants could be employed in planting, but apparently the
grandfathers look askance at this suggestion!

K
181 The Kurds are a wild and cheerful people. They have been called
treacherous, and undoubtedly some can be quoted in support of this
accusation. Yet it must be remembered that the same of our two
Scottish highlands are by no means done in this respect.

K
184 In the summer the villages of Kurdistan are, unfortunately, very
miserable, and this is caused by the cultivation of rice with its inevitable
231 accompaniment of mosquitoes. During this season most of the British
342 owners move to their "dairies" or summer dwellings on the mountain
tops, where, in shelter of oak branches, they pass the time pleasantly
enough.

Christians

I
795 The Christians of the northern provinces are divided into numerous
sects, several of which are relics of the old schismatic divisions of the
Eastern Communion. They include Chaldeans and Syrian Catholics,
who are under the control of Rome, Jacobites, Armenians, Nestorians
and Seventh Day Adventists.

I
795 Chaldeans, Syrian Catholics and Jacobites are found in Mosul and
many villages on the left bank of the Tigris. Chaldeans are also
467 found in the Supra valley near Amadia and in one large village near
583 Adil. Seventh Day Adventists only flourish in Mosul. Many people
649 in England know something of the Assyrians and their recent history.
142 The Assyrians themselves claim to be descendants of the famous King
dun of Nimrod and are certainly Semites. The term "Assyrian"
now includes ex-Ottoman members of the Nestorian Church who
were denuded either within what is now the Iraq zone or who were
expelled from Hakkari by the Turks during the Great War and returned